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Italian influencer Chiara Ferragni cleared of fraud charges in ‘Pandorogate’ cake scandal

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By Barbie Latza Nadeau

Italian influencer and businesswoman Chiara Ferragni, charged for aggravated fraud in a case ...

Italy’s most famous influencer, Chiara Ferragni, has been cleared of criminal wrongdoing in a 2-million-euro ($2.33 million) fraud case involving Christmas cakes, Easter eggs and children with cancer.

A judge in Milan ruled Wednesday that aggravated fraud charges against Ferragni relating to her alleged promise to donate proceeds from sales of a limited edition, pink-boxed “pandoro” Christmas cake to a children’s cancer charity were not

admissible in court.

Prosecutors had requested a 20-month prison sentence for the 38-year-old fashion and make-up influencer.

“Everything we have done, we have done in good faith, none of us has profited,” she told the court at a hearing in November, admitting she had made a “communication error.”

Ferragni partnered with Italian confectioner Balocco to market limited edition Pandoro “Pink Christmas” cakes in Italy for the festive season in 2022 and 2023, and later, fancy “Dolci Preziosi” chocolate Easter eggs. The marketing campaign suggested proceeds would go to the Regina Margherita children’s hospital in Turin to support paediatric cancer research, boosting sales.

Ferragni’s problems began after an investigative journalist revealed that Balocco had made a 50,000-euro ($58,000) donation to the children’s hospital for cancer research prior to entering into the sponsorship agreement with Ferragni’s companies, and that the influencer was paid a commercial stipend of 1 million euros for sponsorship. Before long, it emerged that the proceeds of the cakes would go directly to Ferragni, in addition to the 1 million euros, and not the hospital.

Neither Balocco nor the hospital were charged with fraud, nor was Ferragni’s then-husband, the rapper Federico Lucia, known as Fedez. But the multi-million-euro empire that Ferragni and Fedez had built soon fell apart.

The couple had a reality television program, popular podcasts, fashion brands and even pop-up stores. They pushed progressive politics, including pro-LGBTQ issues, drawing the ire of both the powerful Catholic Church and right-wing politicians, including Giorgia Meloni who came to power in 2022 as the scandal broke.

“The real role models are not influencers who make loads of money promoting expensive panettoni that are supposedly for charity,” Meloni said from the stage at her political party festival in 2023.

The scandal, dubbed “Pandorogate,” captivated the nation and spurred legislation — pushed by Meloni — to rein in influencers.

What started as a simple fraudulent advertising allegation turned into a state affair, with Italy’s attorney general charging Ferragni criminally in 2025, despite the fact that she and her companies paid €3.4 million to the hospital, gave back the sponsorship fee to confectioner Balocco and reimbursed those who‘d bought the cakes and eggs.

As the saga unfolded, Ferragni’s marriage fell apart, and Fedez, once the darling of Italy’s progressive political set, embraced conservatism and now shows up at Meloni’s meetings and on other right-wing political stages.

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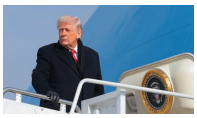

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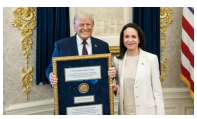

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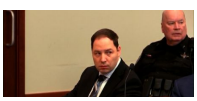

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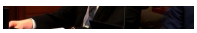

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